(c)In cases of acute urgency and subject to completion of the required documentation, the passport can be issued on the same day and in not so emergent cases, within 3—7 days.

(d)and (e) Passport Office Bangalore is being instructed to open a separate counter for Tatkal applications.

Authentication of Certificates

1751. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Win the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a)whether it is a fact that Indian going to certain countries for job opportunities to have to get their certificates authenticated by Government of India;

(b)if so, the details thereof;

(c)whether Government also have such stipulation for people coming from these countries to India; and

(d)if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes,Sir.

(b)Several countries require authentication of educational degrees and other official documents like marriage certificates of Indian nationals seeking employment there, by the Government of India.

(c)Yes, Sir.

(d)Foreign documents are accepted in India only after similar authentication by concerned foreign governments and duly attested by our diplomatic missions resident in those countries.

Indian peacekeeping forces under UN aegis

1752. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it Is a fact that India has on the request of the United Nations, agreed to increase the strength of its peacekeeping force under UN aegis to 8,000 troops;

(b) if so, presently in which countries our peacekeeping troops are deployed;

(c) the number of casualities, if any, Indian troops suffered during the last five years when serving as UNO peacekeeping forces in different parts of the world; and

(d) whether our troops are adequately compensated for this hazardous nature of duties?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) At present, a total of ' 5636 troop from the Indian Army and Air Force are deployed in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Besides, 123 Armed Forces personnel are deployed as staff Officers and Military Observers in various U.N. Peacekeeping Missions. Inidia has committed to provide additional troops to the UN Mission anticipated in Sudan. If the Mission is established and India is requested to provide troops, the total strength of Indian troops in UN Peacekeeping Operations would increase to around 8,000.

(c) Indian Armed Forces troops have suffered two casualties in the last five years, while serving in UN Peacekeepings Missions. The first casualty was sustaind in an encounter against rebels in Sierra Leone in 2000 and the other in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in a land mine explosion in 2002.

(d) the troops are adequately compensated for the hazardous nature of duty.

Release of Indo-Pak Prisoners

†1753. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to release each other's prisoners following the Indo-Pak Secretary level talks;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.